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BITS FOR BOOKMEN

A BROADWAY bookseller the other day contrived very cleverly to secure a sweeping free advertisement from our daily papers at the expense of a couple of consumptive bookworms which he found in a Seneca of 1675, picked up at some auction. The *Sun* went so far as to give up several columns to the subject, largely made up of quotations from *Blades*. The worms perished as soon as they had served their turn in booming their discoverer's business. All of the newspapers made it a point that these were the first insects of their species found in America, which was a very good story to tell in order to advertise a bookseller, but which, as an assertion of fact, must make men who do not peddle books, but who know and own them, smile with capacious cheerfulness, for the bookworm is really no more a stranger to this country than he is to any other, where old books invite his peculiar appetite. I have even found him in books which I have purchased from booksellers who were not ingenious enough to discover him first for advertising purposes. But booksellers, saving in exceptional cases, sell books only. They do not con them over, and so have missed many opportunities for securing the notoriety honestly achieved by my Broadway friend last week.

As to the bookworm himself, there ought to be no scientific mystery about him. He has been erected into a sort of horrific fantasm by men who write about books; but men who write about books generally have but a rudimentary acquaintanceship with any other subject. In effect, the true bookworm is only one of those species of teredos which bore holes in ships' bottoms in the Tropics, and tunnel wharf timbers until they are such tender shells that the mere weight of the superstructure breaks them down. These fibre-feeding worms are probably as old as the world. They ate up the papyrus of the ancient Egyptian manuscripts for the fibre in them, and they will eat up the books of to-day for the woodpulp used in making the paper on which they are printed. As *Blades* truly observes, they do not attack parchment or vellum, which are made of animal skin; but I have seen scores of manuscripts of this class, bound between wooden boards, whose covers have been riddled by them, while the parchment or vellum has been left intact. I have found that the books which have suffered most from the worms have, curiously enough, been either the worst neglected or the most sedulously cared for. Their ravages have appeared in volumes kept against outer walls or in dark corners of a damp and mildewy character, and also in tomes preserved in close seclusion from the air, till they have grown to have the dry and dusty smell familiar to the delver in old books. Many librarians believe that bookworms are the larvæ of a fly, and keep their books rigidly away from the outer air. Yet the worm finds his way into libraries whose windows are constantly sealed up, and whose doors are felted till no crack appears between them and their frames, and is not known in rooms where the ventilation is unrestricted. There are, no doubt, other boring bugs and flies which will attack books as well, but the bad bookworm of bibliographical legend is of the teredo species, and he isn't nearly as bad as newspaper writers and advertisement-seeking booksellers would have us think.

There are worse enemies of books than bookworms, in the sense, at least, that their damage is more frequent and widely distributed. Damp and mildew spoil more books in a year than worms have in half a dozen centuries. Foxing and dry-rot are other evils that befall a library. Books need to be handled to be preserved in good condition. People who simply buy books to shove them away on shelves to take care of themselves may expect them to suffer. And as such people are not in any sense real book-friends, I cannot imagine their grief at discovering such a casualty to be very poignant, save in the fact that it involves the loss of a little money.

Stone dead as the present period of the year is, one may still find novelties at Mr. Bouton's. Like his friend, Mr. Quaritch, of London, Mr. Bouton, even in midsummer, does not wait for cherries to drop into his mouth. The deep and dusky bookstore in West Twenty-eighth street is cool on the hottest day, and the enormous accumulation of works on shelves and tables provides a perpetual source of interest for the visitor. Among Mr. Bouton's importations of the latest French publications two are especially worthy of note. One is "Le Duel à Travers les Ages," by Gabriel Letainturier-Fradin, from the house of Flammarion. This work covers the history and legislation of dueling, and gives accounts of celebrated duels and the code which regulates the practice, and

has a prefatory article by A. Tavernier, and an original introductory sonnet by Anatole de Montaiglon. The subject is handled with the grace a cultivated Frenchman always brings to monographical writings of any kind, and the book is abundantly and excellently illustrated.

Another book at Mr. Bouton's is a delightful biography of Charles Monselet, who died four years ago. It is written by his son, André Monselet, and has an introduction by Jules Claretie, the publisher being Emile Testard. Making all allowance for the partiality of a son writing of his parent, the book cannot be too highly commended. It is a biography with the sequence of a romance in it, and gives us the genial writer as he lived, with many portraits and caricatures of him, made at various stages of his life. A very complete and useful bibliography of Monselet terminates the volume.

One of the largest collections of books and pamphlets in the country was that left by the late T. O. H. P. Burnham, the eccentric old Boston bookseller. Soon after his death the administrators of his estate advertised for sealed bids from all persons desirous of purchasing the collection, and the successful bidders were three former employees of Mr. Burnham—R. C. Lichtenstein, who was with him for twenty-five years; William H. Greenleaf, who was in his employ for thirty-one years, and Henry F. Dodge, who was with him for nearly ten years. The terms of the transaction have not been announced. The collection consists of 250,000 bound books and about 150,000 pamphlets. There are many volumes of early Americana, and as many as 50,000 odd volumes, the placing of which upon the market will offer an unusual opportunity for completing broken sets. One of the treasures of the collection is an original copy of the "Bay Psalm Book," which was printed in Cambridge in 1640, and is said to be the first book published in America. There are not more than twelve copies of this work in existence, of which the Boston Public Library owns three. It is pleasant to learn that good-hearted old Burnham's treasure stock has passed into such worthy hands.

The valuable compilation, by Mr. Paul Leicester Ford, of "Pamphlets on the Constitution of the United States Published During its Discussion by the People," is to be followed by a companion volume of "Essays on the Constitution," published at the same period. Among the better known of the essayists are James Sullivan, Elbridge Gerry, Oliver Ellsworth, Roger Sherman, George Clinton, Alexander Hamilton, Hugh Williamson and Charles Pinckney. Their medium was the public press of the several States. Mr. Ford's address is 97 Clark street, Brooklyn, N. Y., where his publications may be subscribed for. His reprint, from the Boston Public Library's Bulletin, of his own "Some Materials for a Bibliography of the Official Publications of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789," which makes a handsome volume, with a page in double columns, of which one is blank, to admit of insertions, is another work to which the attention of collectors of Americana may be directed for their own profit.

Advices from London notify us that the Althorp Library, which, in consequence of the difficulties of his position, due to reduced rentals of his agricultural estates, Lord Spencer some time since announced would be sold at public auction unless a purchaser for the whole could be found, has been sold entire to Mrs. Rylands, of Manchester. The library, which is the most splendid private collection of books in the world, comprises 50,000 volumes, almost every one of which has some uncommon value of its own. It contains the rarest editions and most historic bindings and most priceless examples of illustration and early printing on vellum, all of which are unusually well preserved. Its collection of Bibles is unique. The purchaser of the library will, it is stated, provide a suitable building for its reception, to which the general public shall have free access, in her own city. The price paid for the collection was £250,000.

The total yield of the Maignac sale of bric-à-brac at Christie's in London, last month, was over half a million of dollars. At the same auction rooms the library, so-called, of the same collection, was subsequently sold for \$800. Mr. George W. Smalley, in the *Tribune* of this city for July 31st, has some shrewd and sensible words to say upon the sharp contrast between these results. Mr. Smalley, who is a book-lover of the true, tender spirit, comments

with a bitter inflection quite excusable on the inequality represented by the figures of these sales. But Mr. Smalley should allow for the fact that pictures and works of art present a purely sensuous pleasure to their owners, and one which the least intellectual and the most ignorant may enjoy, while it requires brains to appreciate a book. Moreover, art collecting is fashionable these days, while book collecting is rather out of the running for the time being.

Mr. Smalley, by the way, writes also:

The "Lounger" of *The Critic* quotes from the *Publishers' Weekly* a letter, or part of a letter, relating to a recent sale in New York of a First Folio Shakespeare for \$6,000. The story of the sale is, according to this writer, "perfectly correct"; the copy was "a really fine one; sound, clean and richly bound." That is an excellent example of the kind of bibliographical information one does not want. It would be interesting, I said, and I now repeat, to know the size of the \$6,000 copy, its condition and the reason for the extraordinary price asked and given.

The writer quoted in *The Critic* tells us none of these things. He does not give the facts; he expresses an opinion the value of which could be better estimated if we knew who he was. He thinks the copy a really fine one; others might not. He gives no dimensions, and, in a case of this kind, measurements, supposing the book to be genuine throughout, are of the first importance. He does not even give us any assurance that there are no leaves in fac-simile. The only word in his description which has the true bibliographical ring is "sound." The copy is clean, he says; and one can only hope he does not mean cleaned. The phrase "richly bound" discredits his authority. In no First Folio is the binding likely to form a considerable part of the value, when the price is \$6,000; and it may very well detract from it.

So I venture to ask once more for an accurate description of this costly volume. Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co., who sold it, have a high reputation, which it is for their interest to maintain. They are said to have sold another copy for \$6,500. I can but remark again that these prices are, so far as I know, entirely without precedent in England, and that they can only be justified in America by the exceptional size and condition of the copies for which these great sums have been paid. I do not mean to suggest that they are not justified. I only want to know the facts. The First Folio is, to an Englishman or American, one of the most interesting books in the world. It has been supposed that all the important copies were known, and the particulars about them known. Whence came these two? They must have a history and a pedigree, and there can be no reason for withholding the truth.

It is idle to say that the particulars asked for are details. Everything in bibliography is detail, and it is the excellence of detail on which the money value of the book depends. Half an inch of margin may mean \$1,000, or a good deal more. A line of fac-simile would, for a fastidious collector—and all good collectors are supereminently fastidious—be fatal to the copy—would, at least, diminish its value by a great sum. So would a mended leaf; so would a bad impression of the portrait.

Vernon Heath's "Recollections," which have been published by Cassell & Co., make some readable material for people interested in modern English art. The author is the nephew of the collector who gave the more famous than perfect Vernon Gallery to the English nation. His rich uncle left him poor, however, and he went in for photography for a living and succeeded at it. His great pictures of the gigantic Burnham Beeches, which are to England what our California big trees are to the United States, and of other remarkable landscape relics, are famous. He was probably the first man to do the beauties of the upper Thames justice in picture and print. The remotest parts of Scotland and Ireland were visited by him, and their picturesque features recorded by his camera and his pen.

One of Mr. Heath's anecdotes is too good not to be retold. He says that there had been some differences between Robert Vernon and Sir Edwin Landseer in regard to a certain picture, the subject of which was to be spaniels. It never was painted, though Landseer had received the money for it. At last it was agreed that the work for Mr. Vernon should be ready for the exhibition of 1845. The time for sending the picture arrived, and the keeper of the institution received an empty frame, with an undertaking that a picture for it should be delivered in good time. The Hanging Committee put in its place the empty frame. Varnishing day came, but there was no picture. Mr. Heath went in person to Landseer's house at 11 A. M. The artist declined at first any interruption, but when the author was admitted there was Landseer with an untouched canvas on his easel. Landseer said: "I shall send that to the institution to-night a finished picture, and have consequently given orders not to be disturbed, for on

that depends whether I can complete the task I have set myself." Next morning Mr. Heath saw "The Cavalier's Pets," the well-known picture of the two spaniels on the table with the cavalier's hat which provides material for one of the prettiest plates in the *Art Journal's* engraved series on the Vernon Gallery.

The reminiscences of the late Sir Richard Wallace, the collector, issued for this country by D. Appleton & Co., under the title of "An Englishman in Paris," form two delightful volumes of gossip, thoroughly personal in style. The author knew everybody in his day, and, as it appears from his pages, judged everybody he knew pretty accurately. His book reads like the chat of a rich man, as he was, made good humored by nature or prosperity, but not without a proper, gentlemanly scorn of the petty meannesses of human nature. One curious recollection of his early days in Paris tells of a good angel of the Latin Quarter, a Mme. Chanfort, who had become "a downright providence to the generally impecunious painters, whom she used to feed at prices which even then were ridiculously low," but she declared that she had money enough to live on, and supplied food at cost because she would not be without the company of the artists. When she died over a hundred portraits of her were found among her chattels, mere crayon sketches, but not one of them sold for less than 50f.; several fetched 200f. and 300f., while one in oil went for 800f., and another for 1,200f. Nearly all these students had then become famous, and one of them was Paul Delaroche.

Sir Richard's reminiscences are worth buying, if only for their chapter on that wonderful and, by modern criticism, wonderfully misappreciated genius, Alexandre Dumas. He tells us that Dumas was most hospitable. Men often sat at his table whose names he did not know. His own house at one time comprised, besides himself, two secretaries and three servants, and yet his meat bill for a single month was known to reach 1,100f. His living was always extravagant, and he had no end of financial difficulties, as all the world knows. He absolutely did not know the value of money. Wallace thinks that for forty years he could not have earned less than \$40,000 per annum, and still, "though he neither smoked, drank, nor gambled, though, in spite of his mania for cooking, he himself was the most frugal of eaters—the beef from the soup of the previous day grilled was his favorite dish—it rained writs and summonses around him, while he himself was frequently without a penny." His earnings were often divided into three equal portions, of which he got only one. The remainder went to his creditors and his collaborators. He "would have squandered the fortune of all the Rothschilds combined" not on himself, however, for he "would have given it away or allowed it to be taken." One day the author called on Dumas, finding him ill. His son, the present Alexandre, had just gone from the house, and the father remarked: "C'est un cœur d'or, cet Alexandre." Dumas had that morning received 650f., and the son had remarked that, as he was going to Paris, he would take a certain part. The father, understanding that he would take all but 50f., remarked: "Don't take as much as that. Leave me 100f.," at which the son explained that he had said he would take 50f. instead of leaving that amount. Wallace adds that Dumas would have thought it a most natural thing for his son to take the 600f. and leave him only 50f. When the boy was a youth of eight he met with an accident, and blood-letting with leeches was proposed by the doctor. The boy shrank from the application, but said to his father, who urged it: "Well, put some on yourself, and then I will." At which "the giant turned up his sleeves and did as he was told." And yet there are pigmy scribblers who do machine work for the press to-day who would have us believe that this man was a literary nonentity.

Dumas, always driven for money, always working to pay for a dead horse, fathered much work that he should not in honesty have fathered. But that which was his own should be sufficient to give him indisputably the place in literary history which he fairly won.

An interesting catalogue to book collectors is the latest issued by the Brunox Librairie du Bibliophile, 7 Rue Guénégaud, Paris.

A chimney piece carved from wood over six thousand years old has recently been erected in a house in Edinburgh. The wood, an oak tree, was found in a sand pit at Musselburgh, thirteen feet below the surface. Prof. Geikie of the Geology Chair of the University of Edinburgh, after personally examining the strata in which the oak was found, said the tree, which was 5 feet 9 inches in diameter, must be at least six thousand years old, and describes it as a relic of neolithic man. It was in a fine state of preservation, due to the sand, and was easily workable.